



# STERLING LIGHTING

*Volume 5*

## *Our Purpose*

Your purpose is one of your company's most valuable assets.

While this statement may seem like hyperbole, I've personally seen the enormous impact of purpose in my own company. It's foundational to your business. Your purpose dictates and guides how your company runs and how far it will go. It's your compass telling you what to take on and what to say no to. It provides everyone in the organization a direction to work towards. You support your purpose with a common set of values shared by you and everyone on your team. Ultimately, your purpose and your core values will shape your company's culture.

It took us a number of years to find our purpose as a company. We had trouble articulating it, but it just needed to be discovered. We asked questions like "why did we start the business," "what do we enjoy about the business," and "what motivates us to continue in this business?" For us, we realized it wasn't about what we do, but how we can positively impact others.

However, even after that realization, it took some time for Pat and I to work out how we could form a cohesive purpose when we owned three very different companies: a manufacturing company, a mosquito control company, and a lighting installation company. So, we began to try

and answer the "why" questions of our businesses by listing out what we wanted to accomplish: good stewardship, building others up, providing for our families, and helping others.

From there, we were finally able to discover our purpose statement. Now, everyone who works at Sterling Lighting knows our purpose well: We practice faithful stewardship over everything that is entrusted to us, and we positively influence all those who come into contact

with us. It's why we exist as an organization. It also prevents people from working here that do not share our vision, and it gives us a unified direction we're all committed to moving toward.

Understanding and articulating your purpose statement is difficult enough, but applying it takes even more creativity and effort. However, we've worked hard to be intentional about living out our purpose and letting it

guide how we run our business. Our purpose gives us a yardstick to measure our decisions against. Either consciously or unconsciously, we always ask ourselves: Will this decision make a positive impact on the lives of our customers, employees, family members, or friends?

So, when we design and manufacture high-quality products, our purpose underlies our choice not to cut



Company owners left to right: Josh Palmer, Damien Sanchez, Patrick Harders

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corners to save 15% on a product that will fail in two years. Poorly-made LED fixtures that need repairwork after a couple years will leave a bitter taste in your mouth. However, by using quality materials and cutting-edge technology, we're able to offer you a product you'll feel confident installing.

When we decided how we would sell our fixtures, our purpose guided our choice to sell directly to contractors instead of distributors. While this may have slowed our growth because we've had to build our brand from the ground up, it has also saved us 20-30% on our fixtures. We've then been able to pass those savings along to you! Selling directly to contractors has also allowed us to form stronger relationships with you, our customer.

Finally, when we asked ourselves what else we could do to positively impact our customers, our purpose underlay our decision to create marketing programs, such as Sterling Storefront. We wanted to help our fellow small business owners with an aspect of their business that, because of the time and money involved, often gets put off to the side. Our hope is that by offering affordable, easy-to-use marketing solutions, you'll be able to more effectively get the

word out about your company.

Other marketing programs are also in the works. Just last month, we went and visited a couple of our customers down in Florida, Tim Pleasant and Tim Salopek, to shoot company videos and testimonials for them. In the future, we hope to continue to use our video and marketing resources to help even more of our customers.

Ultimately, I believe that when we fulfill our purpose, we help your business thrive. This, in turn, gives you more time and energy to positively impact the people in your own life. This is why I encourage all entrepreneurs to form and embrace a purpose.

Once you know your purpose, you can form your core values, which determine how you act. With purpose influencing your decisions and core values influencing your actions, you begin to form an intentional culture in your company. You will spend so much of your life working in your business, why create an accidental culture that doesn't align with the vision of what you want your company to look like? Purpose is just the first step, but it's an important one.

*Damien Sanchez - Co Owner*

## Light Travels - Visiting Florida



Left: Tad Pleasant installs an SLO1 up light near a small palm, Middle: One of the fleet vehicles, Right: A beautiful lighting system done by Pleasant Lightscapes Inc.

This May, our Marketing Director and videographer, Bryan, and I went down to Florida for a week to visit a couple of our customers who have been designing great outdoor lighting systems. Our first visit was with Tim Pleasant, the owner of Pleasant Lightscapes Inc in Bradenton FL. We were able to see how he runs his operation and go out with him on a couple of

installations. While we were down there, we had some great conversations about marketing.

Keep an eye out on our social media pages and our website because we'll be releasing some videos and pictures from our trip in the near future.

*Jim Heim - General Manager*

## Business Challenges Hiring and Firing



Of all the things Pat and I have had to do in our business, one of the hardest has been to let people go. I can't think of a more uncomfortable responsibility we have as leaders, and I think it's one of the biggest issues that business owners struggle with. Since 2014, our thoughts on firing have been shaped by the training we've received through Infusionsoft's Elite Forum. If you've spent any time around me, you know I talk about them a lot.

They've helped us learn how to integrate our purpose and core values into every aspect of how we run our business, including how we determine who we fire and how we fire. The task of firing becomes much easier once you've pinned down your purpose and core values. But how do you actually prepare for and accomplish the task itself?

In her webinar, "Firing for the Vision," Infusionsoft's Cindy Eagar lays out how to set your employees up for success and how to determine when they need to be let go.

### Set Expectations Up Front

Your employees should know upfront what successful performance looks like. Cindy defines performance as "results plus values." When you lay out your expectations and your company's core values, your employees will know how they can excel at their job, and you will know how to best coach them and hold them accountable.

### Coach Appropriately

An employee's performance can vary across what Cindy calls the "performance continuum." Either they're

performing well or underperforming, but the coaching they require will depend on where exactly they fall on the continuum. For example, an employee who has just started to underperform will need different coaching than an employee who has been poorly performing for a month.

### Fire Respectfully

If an employee continues to underperform, even after you've coached them and allowed them time to improve, they need to be fired. Firing does not need to be a long, drawn-out conversation. Cindy says it can be done in 3 sentences: "As you know, we've had conversations about your performance. We have not seen the progress needed for success in this role. Therefore, we have decided to terminate your employment, effective immediately."

### Provide Balanced Communication

Once your employee has been fired, you need to tell the rest of your team as soon as possible. Be upfront and let them know that you had been coaching the individual who was fired, but his or her performance expectations were not met. This shows your team that you're willing to put in the effort to help each of them succeed up until the day they leave the company.

### But What If You're A Small Business?

For small business owners, it can be incredibly hard to make the decision to fire that one team member, especially if that individual accounts for 25% of your company's workforce. I've been there before, and it's not a comfortable position to be in. You're worried about having to do their job and finding another person who can replace them. However, putting in the extra work after they've been let go will pay dividends down the road. The short term effects of firing may be painful, but it's best for your company in the long run.

*Damien Sanchez - Co-Owner*

To learn more about Elite Forum, contact [Stephanie.Hitchins@Infusionsoft.com](mailto:Stephanie.Hitchins@Infusionsoft.com).

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Visit us online at

[www.sterling-lighting.com](http://www.sterling-lighting.com)

## *Photo Contest*

Because we want to help your company thrive, Sterling Lighting is hosting its very first Photo Contest!

### **How to Enter**

It's simple! Until July 1, send pictures of your best installations using Sterling Lighting fixtures to [photocontest@slights.com](mailto:photocontest@slights.com). We'll post the photos on our social media accounts using the hashtag #SterlingLighting.

### **The Prize**

The winner will receive a professional video marketing package that includes:

- A professionally edited video you can post on your website and social media



- A shorter video ad for YouTube and social media
- All the raw files for future marketing use

The winner will be announced July 10, 2017. For more information and to read our guidelines, visit [sterling-lighting.com/photo-contest](http://sterling-lighting.com/photo-contest).